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# Leading Learning: A Grounded Theory Perspective of Orang Asli Parental Involvement and Engagement

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## Abstract

Past research argued that the lack of parental involvement contributed to poor academic achievement among the Orang Asli (OA) students. This paper illuminates OA parental involvement with their children's learning, based upon a Grounded Theory study of learners' retrospective perspectives. Participants were fourteen OA students who have reached tertiary education. This study reveals an emerging theory of OA parents leading learning. Implications for practice include for school to consider the OA social and cultural capital in leading the learning of the OA students, and to minimise the barriers that made the parents' involvement invisible to educators.

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**Keywords:** grounded theory; indigenous education; leading learning; Orang Asli education; parental engagement; parental involvement.

## 1. Introduction

Research has shown that parental involvement (PI) sustains their children's learning engagement and improves academic achievement. Its importance in the education of children has been in focus for over 40 years (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Epstein's study on the role of parents in education led to the development of six types of involvement for parents-school-community partnerships (Epstein, 1995) that have been extensively referred to in furthering the benefits of PI. Since then, numerous studies have been conducted to explore and elaborate on how best parental involvement can be considered and incorporated in formal education (Hornby, 2000; Redding, 2000; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014; Stevens &

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Patel, 2015). In addition, the concept of PI has evolved to highlight different aspects and emphasis of PI in the school and at home. Goodall and Montgomery (2014) differentiate involvement in the two domains as PI in the school and as parental engagement for PI at home. For ease of analysis, this paper uses PI to describe involvement in both the environments.

PI is influenced by several underlying factors, including parents' sense of efficacy, resources, and specific invitations from teachers (Anderson & Minke 2007), parent's belief of its value and that their involvement would make a difference (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2001), and the child's level of attainment (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). The influence of ethnicity on PI is not immediately obvious in the literature (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Murray, McFarland-Piazza & Harrison, 2015). However, studies on benefits of minority ethnic's PI have been reported in which parents and elders in the community were involved in the development of culture based curriculum that contributed to better student's engagement in the school (Johansson, 2009; Galindo & Medina, 2009; Rethinasamy, et al., 2013).

In the context of the present study, Orang Asli is the official name of the Peninsular Malaysia's indigenous communities comprising 18 sub-ethnic groups, representing about 0.6 percent of the total population (Lye, 2011; Tarmiji, Fujimaki & Norhasimah, 2013). The majority of the population lives in the fringes, with some 40% in remote villages, deep in the rainforest that are not easily accessible (Tarmiji, Fujimaki & Norhasimah, 2013; Wan Afizi et al.; 2014). 76.9% of the Orang Asli population live beneath the poverty line, out of which 35.2% is classified as living in hard-core poverty, compared to 1.4% nationally (Mohd Asri, 2012; Tarmiji, Fujimaki & Norhasimah, 2013). Thus, their social and economic position situates them among the disadvantaged minorities, with some authors classifying them as marginalised (Johari, 2007; Tarmiji, Fujimaki & Norhasimah, 2013). Orang Asli education was formalized in 1952 (Edo, 2012). Since then, educating the communities has been one of the Government's priorities (MOE, 2013). However, Orang Asli PI with their children's learning has been reported by many researchers as less than satisfactory (Edo, 2012; Hamidah, Abdul Rahman & Khalip, 2013; Nur Bahiyah et al., 2013). For instance, Edo (2012) highlights the plight of Orang Asli and their education situation. The questions that have been bandied about in many discussions are why parents of Orang Asli children lack awareness of the importance of education, and why Orang Asli parents are not interested in the schooling of their children.

The purpose of this paper is to present the findings of Orang Asli PI with their children's learning. This study is valuable as it refers to aspects of Orang Asli PI that have not been sufficiently illuminated in the existing literature and discussion on the topic, except in the context of deficit, that is the lack of their involvement.

## 2. Methodology

After due consideration, Glaser's classical grounded theory (CGT) method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was deemed the most appropriate method to explore the nature of PI among these Orang Asli students. It provides a novel approach to explore a familiar theme but in a context that have not been given much consideration because of the prevalent deficit perception of past studies. The main research participants comprised fourteen Orang Asli students (P1 to P14) that have reached the tertiary level of education, ranging from 18 to 25 years old. However, the initial data collection was purposive and exploratory in order to give direction to the research. This included telephone conversations with officials of the Department of Orang Asli Development also referred to as Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (JAKOA) to obtain an initial understanding of the Orang Asli educational provision, visits to the State JAKOA office and conversations with the officers-in-charge, visits to an Orang Asli Primary School located in the middle of an Orang Asli village, conversations with the Head Teacher and Teachers, and classrooms visit. Following this, further data was collected on different days, through two sessions of in-depth unstructured recorded interviews with the first student participant. Each interview session lasted about two hours, including breaks. The questions, probes and prompts revolved around the experience of the student during her early years through her kindergarten, and primary schooling years. Based upon the preliminary analysis of this first stage data, theoretical sampling follows. The subsequent data was collected through in-depth unstructured interviews with more student participants, introduced through snowball leads.

The PI data analysed for this paper was part of a larger study that explored how the key roles led the learning of the Orang Asli students. Using the 'Constant Comparative Method' and 'Memoing' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the data was analysed in several back and forth stages. First, data of each participant was analysed as a case, based upon parents

as a conceptual role, encompassing all the family individuals that contributed to the students' learning. Open coding elevated a fragment of raw data into another level of conceptual abstraction: for example, a place to study is learning space, books and stationery are learning resources, and siblings teaching the alphabet are learning initiators. Next, the concepts from the open coding were compared and contrasted, examining patterns that gave rise to the next level of abstraction, referred to as category. In this example, providing learning space, providing learning resources and having learning initiators are properties of the category initializing learning. Memo on a fragment of data, and further memo on memo clarified and elaborated the conceptualization process, explaining the abstraction throughout the entire data analysis process. Delimiting occurred during the selective coding process, when the properties and its theoretical connections solidified (Glaser & Holton, 2004). The final writing-up involved the sorting, shuffling and ordering of memos into a comprehensible output. In CGT, the data collection and analysis is a joint process, terminated upon saturation of concepts and categories, which means that subsequent data does not produce any new incident (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Following the established role of the literature review in CGT is to provide additional data for constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; McCallin, 2006), data from the literature view of emerging concepts was weaved into the findings presented in this paper.

Finally, to ease analysis and the writing up, the following terms are used as Proper Names with respect to each participant: Father, Mother, Grandfather, Grandmother, Brother, Sister, Uncle, Aunt, Cousin, and Child; hence the use of capital letters for these terms when used in conjunction with the respective participants (P1 to P14).

### 3. Findings

The data captured through the voices of the student participants showed that the concept of parents within the Orang Asli community extended beyond that of the fathers and mothers. Other family members including grandparents, siblings, and parents' siblings, took on the conceptual role of parents to fill up the PI gaps. These family members, especially the older siblings, contributed to the schooling progress and strong level of learning engagement of the research participants. For example, older sisters worked to help support the family, financially (P1, P14); in the absence of Mother, an aunt was the homework supervisor, despite being illiterate, made sure P1 and her cousins completed their homework. Older daughters in the family helped managed the household when mothers were sick or away. For instance, P2 depicted a unique case of a child-headed household of four, where the learner, P2, had to assume the role of parent during her primary years to cover for her parents who had to find employment in distant townships. There was less indication of parental involvement in the school, except for attending school events to support their children during year-end prize giving for achieving students, attending the school sports day, and for the Muslim Orang Asli parents, attending special prayers organised by the school prior to the major examination weeks. Fathers were more involved in the school, when they were also community leaders, such as a JAKOA liaison person, and a *Tok Batin* (the Village Head). This study revealed that Orang Asli PI is about the process of parents leading learning, encompassing the categories of how parents were involved in the processes of initialising learning, facilitating learning, accommodating learning, and generating learning; emerging from the data of participants' experience, before kindergarten, during kindergarten and the primary school years.

#### 3.1. Initialising Learning

The concept 'initialising' is similar to that use in computing, which is to set the value or put in the condition appropriate to the start of an operation; although in this study, the concept 'value' takes on a different shade. Value in this context, is belief and aspiration for a better future. Hence, based upon the findings, the category of initialising learning is defined by the belief, aspirations and the conditions that exist to initiate learning. The extent of initialising learning is indicated by the home learning environment and routine comprising: (a) communicating belief and aspiration, (b) providing learning space and learning resources, (c) setting learning routine and, (d) having learning initiators.

*Communicating belief and aspirations:* Parents indicated their belief on the importance of education, and subsequently communicated their high aspiration through actions such as relocating to be near the education provider, waking the children up in time for bath and getting them ready for school, telling the children to be good in school

while combing the children's hair, showing care for how their children appeared in school, giving them breakfast, even when it was just a simple hot drink, and in one child-headed household, leaving and trusting the children to manage themselves, while Father and Mother sought the much needed employment away from home.

*Providing learning space and learning resources:* The data indicates that study space was usually the floor; even when parents did provide study table, children still preferred the comfort of lying on the floor. In most cases, economic and structural constraints did not allow for the provision of separate learning space. Learning resources were limited to stationery that could include coloured pencils; books were notebooks and textbooks from the school. In reality though, the entire forest was at their disposal, as extended learning space and resources, with children role-playing as teacher and students, pretending to write on pieces of leaves, using twigs as pencils (P7); and children crossing and lingering in the stream on their way back from school (P2). Television, when available, was a learning tool, sparking interest in the English language (P1), whilst some others were influenced by smart characters in uniforms and aspired to be like them (P5, P14).

*Setting the learning routine:* Early morning routine ensured the child went to school. Mothers woke up children, ensured that they took their bath and teeth brushed, and gave them breakfast which could be just a cup of tea and sweetened condensed milk. Mothers combed the children's hair, a routine etched in the memory of participants because during this seemingly simple routine, Mothers chatted and motivated the children about behaving in school, and to study well (P5, P10). In the village, cold bath was always outside. Mothers supervised school morning routine; assisted by older siblings, especially sisters. Kindergartners were awakened and prepared last, to allow for the senior siblings to get ready for their earlier school time. After school routine included asking about homework to be completed, monitoring the child on homework completion, and helping the child when they could.

*Having learning initiators telling stories, sharing experiences, role playing, and playing traditional games:* Learning initiators were Grandmothers narrating folktales; Mother and older siblings teaching and singing the alphabet song; and Father guiding tourists during forest walks, whilst the accompanying child listened, experiencing the forest and wondering, how Father could speak the language of the foreign visitors. Learning initiators included older friends role-playing as teachers, conducting 'classes' for the younger children.

The process of initialising learning illustrates the actions and provisions of Orang Asli parents within the context of deficit: communicating their belief and aspiration, providing home learning environment, and setting learning routine. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) and Fan, Williams and Wolters (2012) found that parental high aspiration for children's education promotes schooling motivation, and shaped children's self-concept as learners. In addition, learning initiators provided input that helped start the children's learning journey.

### 3.2. Facilitating Learning

The process of facilitating connotes promoting, assisting and supporting (Robinson, Molenda & Rezabek, 2008). Facilitating learning in this study involves creating the means and conditions to promote, assist and support the continuity of learning. As facilitators, parents listened to their children's concern, and responded to their learning 'antics', as in the case of P2 who read loudly from the textbook, loving the sound of her own voice, while mother listened indulgently. Other instances include Mother giving company, bringing lunches to school, eating at the school canteen with her children (P8), Mother staying in the classroom until the child was familiar with her new surrounding (P1), and Mother receiving her child's academic progress report, and quietly enquiring, "How was my son in the classroom?" (P10). The process of Orang Asli parents facilitating learning has the following properties: (a) providing support by being in school, (b) showing pride, giving praise and simple reward for achievement, (c) school language at home, (d) ensuring school attendance, (e) providing financial support, (f) sharing positive experience, and (g) punishing children.

*Providing support to children in school (Parents in school):* Parents visited school for various events and reasons: attending the registration day, visiting child at the hostel, receiving the student's academic progress report; attending scheduled events such as the parents-teachers meeting, prize-giving day, sports day and organised special prayer prior to scheduled examinations, the '*Solat Hajat*'; and staying in the classroom to comfort a child new to school. Parents and extended family members also provided the comfort of a familiar face in school, such as an uncle as a subject teacher, mothers as teachers in the kindergarten, and an aunt as a hostel warden. Although limited, PI in school provided emotional and motivational support that facilitated learning. Otherwise, parents kept themselves out of

school, hence the common perception of Orang Asli parents' lack of involvement, except in cases where parents were community heads and representatives.

*Showing pride, giving praise and reward for achievement:* Parents showed pride and happiness when children shared their school achievement with parents. Students shared the excitement of winning competitions, getting prizes for the wins and being first in the class. Responses to such announcements include simple congratulatory gifts of stationery and treats at the town's restaurant from working siblings (P5). In the case of P1, Mother was happy when P1 achieved the first position in class, but her pride was low-key. As P1 stated, her mother was a simple person. However, there was no compulsion for others among the siblings to compete with the achievement of the achiever (P1). Each child was allowed their own learning path. Parents motivated their children to do well, "They could not help me much with the subjects, but that did not stop them from encouraging me to study well" (P9), thus keeping learning in focus.

*School language at home:* Differing mother tongue (ethnic language) and school languages (*Bahasa Melayu* and English) has been known to place the Orang Asli children at a disadvantaged in the school, where teachers were not familiar with the local ethnic language (Mohamad Johdi et al., 2009; Abdull Sukor et al., 2011; Ramle et al., 2013). The present study found that television provided access to the languages used in school, such as through watching children's educational programmes in English (P1), and watching recorded popular *Bahasa Melayu* movies, the nationally well-known '*P. Ramlee movies*' (P7). In addition, *Bahasa Melayu* was also the language used to communicate with other ethnic groups, and outside communities, whilst P9 had the opportunity to listen to Father communicating in English with international tourists, visiting the highlands where they lived.

*Ensuring school attendance:* An important role of mothers was to ensure children's attendance in school. Waking them up, getting them ready and giving them breakfast was an important routine that facilitated their fresh presence in school. The opposite would be non-attendance, as in cases of parents who would not force their children to get up (Mohd Asri, 2012), or children who would get up earlier than their fathers, and disappeared into the woods with friends to avoid school (P5).

*Providing financial support:* The Orang Asli peoples are among the poorest of the nation (Tarmiji, Fujimaki & Norhasimah, 2013). The income of the families in this study was derived from selling forest and agricultural products, tapping rubbers, and from employment as tour guide, JAKOA employee, policemen, construction worker, and factory and farm workers. Parental financial provision for education was limited, with cases of students who had to work (P2) and to 'pend' primary schooling due to financial distress (P14). This study found that older siblings, grandparents, and parents' siblings (uncles and aunts) helped support the financial needs of the students, easing distress, thus enabling the continuity of formal schooling.

*Sharing positive experience:* Older siblings' positive experience in school helped younger siblings to have an informed perception, minimising fear of school and teachers.

*Punishing children:* Parents punished children to force them to go to school and to ensure that they did their homework. Punishment methods included direct caning with rattan and quick dunking in bath water to force the children to bathe in the morning before going to school. Some children learned the art of avoiding parents' punishment by waking up earlier than parents and escaping into the woods, or running out of the house, before the parents could do anything to stop them, to go and play with friends. '*Rotan*' is a *Bahasa Melayu* term for cane or rattan. The data indicates that the term was used invariably for any form of smacking, using cane or any other available similar-like objects such as ruler, cloth-hanger, and sticks (P2, P5, P6, P8, and P13). Parents, especially fathers would not hesitate to cane the children, for offences related to schooling, such as refusing to go to school, lying about not having homework, and misbehaviours. Father of P8 for instance, gave a piece of cane to the teacher, with the specific instruction to '*rotan*' the child if the need arose.

To summarise, Orang Asli parents facilitating learning promoted, assisted and sustained the continuity of learning through limited involvement in the school. At home, rewards were used to reinforce achievement, while caning was common to control misbehaviour, indicating a behaviourist approach to facilitate sustained learning (Anderman, 2010). The mainstream local culture appears to accept mild caning to control and prevent misbehaviours and extract obedience (Lau, 2015; Nik Rahim, 2015). Older children sharing positive experience and exposure to school languages at home provided the beneficial home-school link.



### 3.3. Accommodating Learning

The concept of accommodation is analogous to that used in describing the adjustment of the lens of the eyes, at various distances, so as to keep the object in focus. In this context, the process of accommodating involves adapting, adjusting, reconciling, and the willingness to do favours or services, to keep learning in focus. The process of Orang Asli accommodating learning has the following properties: (a) multiplicity of roles, (b) decision making, and (c) making change.

*Multiplicity of roles:* The findings indicate a multi-dimensional concept of parents. In this community, the parental roles extended to the grandparents, older siblings, aunts, uncles and older cousins who took on the conceptual role to fill in parental gaps. The roles of others as parents included Aunt providing the comfort of a familiar face in new situation such as beginning kindergarten and school, or settling in the hostel; Grandparents, Older Siblings, and Aunts providing financial support; Older Siblings giving time to send and fetch students to and from school. The extended family support included Aunt monitoring and supervising homework completion, and Grandmother caring for grandchildren when parents were away at work. In an exceptional case, a teachers' role as parent was exemplified in the case of P2 who was drawn to school daily by caring teachers who filled in the gaps of her absent parents.

*Decision making:* Parental involvement in decision making included decision on whether to allow children to join visits organised by the school, participation in sporting activities, choosing which school to enrol, attending and missing classes, and boarding children in the hostel. Parental decision making was influenced by their belief on the value and the impact of school activities on their children's well-being such as "participating in rugby could break a leg" (P10). Thus, based upon this belief, some parents made considerable effort to ensure and sustain their children's attendance in school, whilst some others would take their children's wish to skip classes, and to drop-out of school. Contradictory messages, about attending school, in the family led to the children getting their ways. Contradictory messages appeared in this study in cases of changing life situations (P1, P14), leading to learning disengagement of some siblings in the respective participants' families.

*Making change:* Making change includes relocating and moving out of the comfort zone, thus leading to better access to educational facility. The process of making change was linked to how parents made decision, influenced by their belief that led them to accept and make the change. For instance, a village was so far inland that schooling was a novelty, a unique opportunity for a small number of children. This was the situation that saw Mother (P1) missing the opportunity to go to school, because Grandfather had placed the priority for education for the male children. Mother made the change and moved from the village in order to make school more accessible to her daughter, P1. Change was also triggered by changing life situation due to extreme financial constraint (P5). In this case moving back to their village, gave P5 and his siblings a second chance in school. Making change was also about giving time for study and to prepare for examinations (P2). Giving children time for study is meaningful for students from disadvantaged families due to the multiple roles of children at home. They are not just children-students, but they are also older siblings that need to contribute to caring for the younger children and helping with the household chores.

Thus in accommodating learning, the multiplicity of roles shows various others adopting the parental roles, taking up responsibility, accommodating the educational commitment by giving the space, time and financial aid to sustain a student's learning. This shared parental role is also reported by Lea et al. (2013). How parents make decisions and choices to accommodate learning is influenced by their self-belief and values; a belief whether their actions and considerations can make a difference to their children's learning and well-being, and thus willing to make the adjustments to keep learning in focus. Finally, 'making change' includes taking the steps to relocate, moving out of the comfort zone and giving the time for children to study. As in parents making decision, taking the steps to change is linked to parental aspiration for the children and the belief that education could make a difference,

### 3.4. Generating Learning

Generating learning in this study is defined as making meaning and making sense of real life experience. It involves predicting and knowledge transfer, which is the ability to apply real life experience and prior learning to new situations. Two properties of Orang Asli parents generating learning emerging from this study are: (a) reversed deficit modelling, and (b) transmission of indigenous knowledge.

*Reversed deficit modeling:* This refers to instances when parents transferred the learned implications of real life challenges and deficits, and acknowledging the role of education in overcoming the challenges and lack. Parents transformed real life routine into learning examples of situational awareness. Situational awareness, a concept elaborated by Endsley (1995), could be as simple as being aware of the deficit condition, being poor, and talking about it to convey its implication to the future of their children, and how education could help pull them out of the situation. Although some mothers had no schooling opportunity (P1, P5, and P11), they contributed to their children's learning engagement through reversed deficit modelling, generating vision from real life situations and routine: "If you don't know how to read, how would you know when to press the bell for the bus driver to stop," Mother generating vision of getting lost to P11, if she could not read the road signs. The ability of P11 to recall such long term embedded memory indicates the impact of that simple statement. Wittrock (1992) argued that selective attention is a primary cognitive process in generative learning. The fundamental premise of generative learning is that "people tend to generate perceptions and meanings that are consistent with their prior learning" (Wittrock, 2010, p.41). Strategies in generating learning include summarising, asking questions, clarifying and predicting (Anderman, 2010). In this study, parents generated learning through predicting, making associations of real life experience, deficit and its consequence.

*Transmission of indigenous knowledge:* Grandparents and elders generated knowledge from the physical environment in which they experienced life, as well as the social and cultural activities of the community. They transmitted indigenous knowledge through stories, and involved grandchildren in experiencing real life activities as in: Grandmother telling P1, how to behave when in the forest, and what to do if lost, "just follow the river"; P7 learning life skills helping Grandmother to collect firewood, clear land, and plant vegetables, tapioca and sweet potatoes, and learning community values through '*gotong royong*' a cooperative community activity to plant hill rice; and P9 experiencing the forest with Father. Anderman (2010) argued that contemporary perspectives acknowledge "motivation to engage in future behaviour is intricately tied to prior knowledge and experiences" (p. 55). Thus parents' generated learning was communicated through traditional advice and life experiences that contributed to the children's motivation.

#### 4. Discussion

The emerging grounded theory of Orang Asli parents leading learning is expressed through the continuous systemic processes of initialising, facilitating, accommodating, and generating learning, before and during the process of institutionalized schooling. The theory solidifies the argument that, "Many parents, particularly those from ethnic minorities or those facing economic challenge, find engagement with schools difficult, but still have a strong desire to be involved in their children's learning and educations" (Goodall and Montgomery, 2014, p.400). Similarly, in this study, despite the deficit, Orang Asli parents' desire to be involved is translated into behaviors and actions at home that are not visible to educators. Moreover, in congruence with Lea et al. (2011), the role of parents in the learning system of the Orang Asli households is a shared responsibility. The conceptual role of parents includes mothers, mothers, grandparents, older siblings, aunts, uncles and older relatives. The theory made explicit the hidden systemic processes of the Orang Asli PI and their contributions in the learning system.

##### 4.1. Implications for Practice

The first implication is stronger self-concept will enable parents to generate high expectations; articulate, and communicate their aspirations; and model their behaviours and actions in line with their vision of better future. As Edo (2012) suggests, to improve the education of Orang Asli children, stakeholders (the Government and educators) should not limit their focus to improve literacy and numeracy; rather they must also consider the need to develop and strengthen the self-concept of Orang Asli parents and children. PI has positive impact on academic achievement, regardless of the PI measure used: but the relationship was strongest if PI is defined as parental expectations for academic achievement of their children; the impact was weakest when it is defined as homework assistance (Froiland, Peterson & Davison, 2012; Wilder, 2014). Thus, the inability to help children with their homework should not reduce the aspiration and high expectations of parents for their children. As Lea et al. (2011) argued, "Simply getting the child up and ready for school was commitment enough" (p.269). The second implication is with regard to PI in the school,

Anderson and Minke (2007) found that parents' decision to become involved is an important process in PI, emphasizing that specific invitation from teachers is the single most influential variable on parental involvement choices. The emphasis is significant because schools are able to influence teacher practices to help advance the value of PI to the parents. Despite the social and economic deficit, parents can be encouraged, facilitated and accommodated to assume the role of learning leaders by leveraging on their cultural capital (community values and indigenous knowledge), as exemplified by Johansson (2009) and Rethinasamy et al. (2013). Finally, the discovery of a child-headed household (although temporarily) in this study, raises further question on the extent of this phenomenon in the country.

#### *4.2. Contributions to the Body of Knowledge*

The validity and reliability of findings from CGT method is judged by the four criteria propounded by the founders, Glaser and Strauss (1967) and users (Hoda, 2011; Hakel, 2015): fit, work, relevant and modifiable. The theory fits when it matches the realities under study (Orang Asli PI) in the eyes of the subjects, practitioners and researchers in the area (Orang Asli education); it works when it explains, predicts, and interprets what is happening in the studied phenomenon of the substantive area (Orang Asli PI); it is relevant if it fits and works thus offering explanations of the basic process in the substantive area; and the theory "should be readily modifiable when new data present variations in emergent properties and categories. The theory is neither verified nor thrown out, it is modified to accommodate by integration of the new concepts" (Glaser 1992, p.15). This modifiability as new data emerges what makes the theory continues to fit, work, and be relevant (Flint, 2005). Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain: "Generating hypotheses requires evidence enough to establish a suggestion – not an excessive piling of evidence to establish a proof" (pp.39-40). Hence, this emerging theory of Orang Asli parents leading learning lends itself to modification as new data emerges, in congruence with the inductive realist view of truth (Hunt 2011). The theory extends the knowledge of Orang Asli PI, and captures aspects that have not been sufficiently illuminated in the existing literature and discussion on the topic, except in the context of parental lack of involvement (Johari & Nazri, 2007; Mahmud, Amat & Yaacob, 2008; Sharifah, et al., 2011; Nur Bahiyah, et al., 2013). At this juncture, the theory unveils the latent Orang Asli PI, making explicit their significance within their context of social, economic and human capital deficit. However, based upon current data (both grounded and literature), the claim for generalisation is limited to disadvantaged indigenous and minority education. New data may extend the applicability of the theory to other substantive areas.

### **5. Conclusion**

The emerging grounded theory of Orang Asli parents leading learning illuminates the PI that happened at home, which is not visible to the educators in the school, thus the common perception of the lack of Orang Asli PI. The Orang Asli PI must be seen in context with the social and cultural capital of the community. For instance, the provision of an environment conducive for learning within the traditionally disadvantaged Orang Asli homes must be appreciated within the context of 'lack' – in other words, the condition of deficit. In a world of lack, a little is a lot. Thus is the case of the Orang Asli's home learning environment and provision. Study space was usually the floor; even when parents did provide study tables for the children the preference for lying on the floor prevailed. Stationery included coloured pencils; and books were notebooks and textbooks from the school. Mothers conveyed their aspiration to children through reversed deficit modelling; being poor was the very reason to go to school, to have an education. Embedded in their actions, parents conveyed to their children that education was deemed as an instrument that can bridge the deficit gap. This is the driving essence of the emerging grounded theory of Orang Asli parents leading learning. The theory is explicated through the processes of initialising learning, facilitating learning, accommodating learning, and generating learning.

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